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Observations on the Roman Road and Camps in the neighbourhood of Mansfield Woodhouse in the county of Nottingham. By Hayman Rooke, Esq. F. S. A. with an introductory Letter to the Secretary from Sir George Yonge, Bart. Secretary at War, F. A. S.

Read at the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, June 5, 1788.

SIR,

Stratford Place, May 7, 1788.

I TRANSMIT to you, at the request of my respectable and ingenious friend, Major Rooke, of Woodhouse, a small treatise, which he has drawn up on some Roman Roads, Tumuli, Stations, and Camps, which he has lately traced in the neighbourhood of *Mansfield*, and which have not hitherto been noticed. I cannot comply with his request that it might be transmitted to the Society, without explaining some particulars which gave rise to this treatise. When I first saw the account, which he sent to the Society, of a *Roman Villa* which he had discovered near *Mansfield*, I communicated to him some few sentiments of mine, on which I grounded an opinion, though I was quite unacquainted with the country, that this *Villa* was probably the residence of some military Roman commander, and that there was probably some Roman camp or station, or some military Roman road running near it. This did not by any means appear by his answer to be the case. And yet it still seemed to me improbable that it should be otherwise.

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Having

2 *A Letter from Sir George Yonge, on Roman Roads, &c.*

Having had an opportunity last year of waiting on Major Rooke, and viewing this *Roman Villa*, I was first struck with the appearance that *Mansfield* was probably a Roman station, from whence the *Villa* was not above a mile distant, and indeed was in sight of it; and I thought I saw traces of some Roman roads running near it. On viewing the *Villa* itself (which I found well worth the view) I saw a post still nearer it, which had all the appearance of a Roman camp from its form, and other circumstances; but on enquiry from Major Rooke he assured me there was no such thing there, nor Roman road in the neighbourhood. However, having communicated to him my sentiments, grounded on observations which I had occasionally made on Roman roads, stations, and camps, from whence I had formed a decided opinion, that there was an uniform system of such roads, camps, and stations, throughout the kingdom, and all connected with each other, not only by principal military roads, but by many others also, forming cross communications with each other, as *diverticula*, I entreated Major Rooke to look a little more narrowly into this point; and ventured to prophesy, that, on searching further into this particular spot, which wore the name of *Pleasley Wood*, he would not only find *that* to be a Roman station, but would probably from thence be able to trace a connected chain of them through the country. The time and the season not allowing of it *then*, he promised to do so as he had leisure and opportunity; and the result of his labours is contained in the treatise herewith enclosed.

I hope I shall be forgiven if I take this opportunity, fortified by this experiment of the truth of my ideas on the subject, humbly to submit it to the Society, whether they would not think it adviseable to direct some encouragement to be given to
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an investigation of all the Roman roads, camps, and stations, throughout the kingdom, county by county, for the purpose of ascertaining the connected military system and principles on which they were formed; which may lead to a curious discovery of the extent and situation of the many Roman towns, camps, and villas, which must have existed in this country during the period of four hundred years, for which Britain was a very distinguished member of the great Roman Empire. Such investigation gradually, but regularly, pursued, would neither be expensive nor laborious; there being very little doubt, but that there are ingenious persons in every county, who, on such a wish being properly communicated to them by the Society, would readily second those wishes, and, with very little assistance in having plans or drawings made by order of the Society, where the accounts transmitted might appear to justify it, produce in time a very compleat account and system of these military Roman remains as well as of other *municipia*, and perhaps *baths* and other vestiges of Roman magnificence.

I beg pardon for the liberty I have taken of suggesting thus much, and for detaining you so long upon this subject; but I thought the explanation necessary to elucidate the occasion of the treatise transmitted from Major Rooke, and I also thought the subject not unworthy the attention of the Society. It will give both Major Rooke and me great pleasure, if they should be of the same opinion, or if they should think what has been offered in any degree deserving their notice.

I am, with regard,

S I R,

your most obedient

humble servant,

GEO. YONGE.

To the Right Hon. Sir George Yonge, Bart.

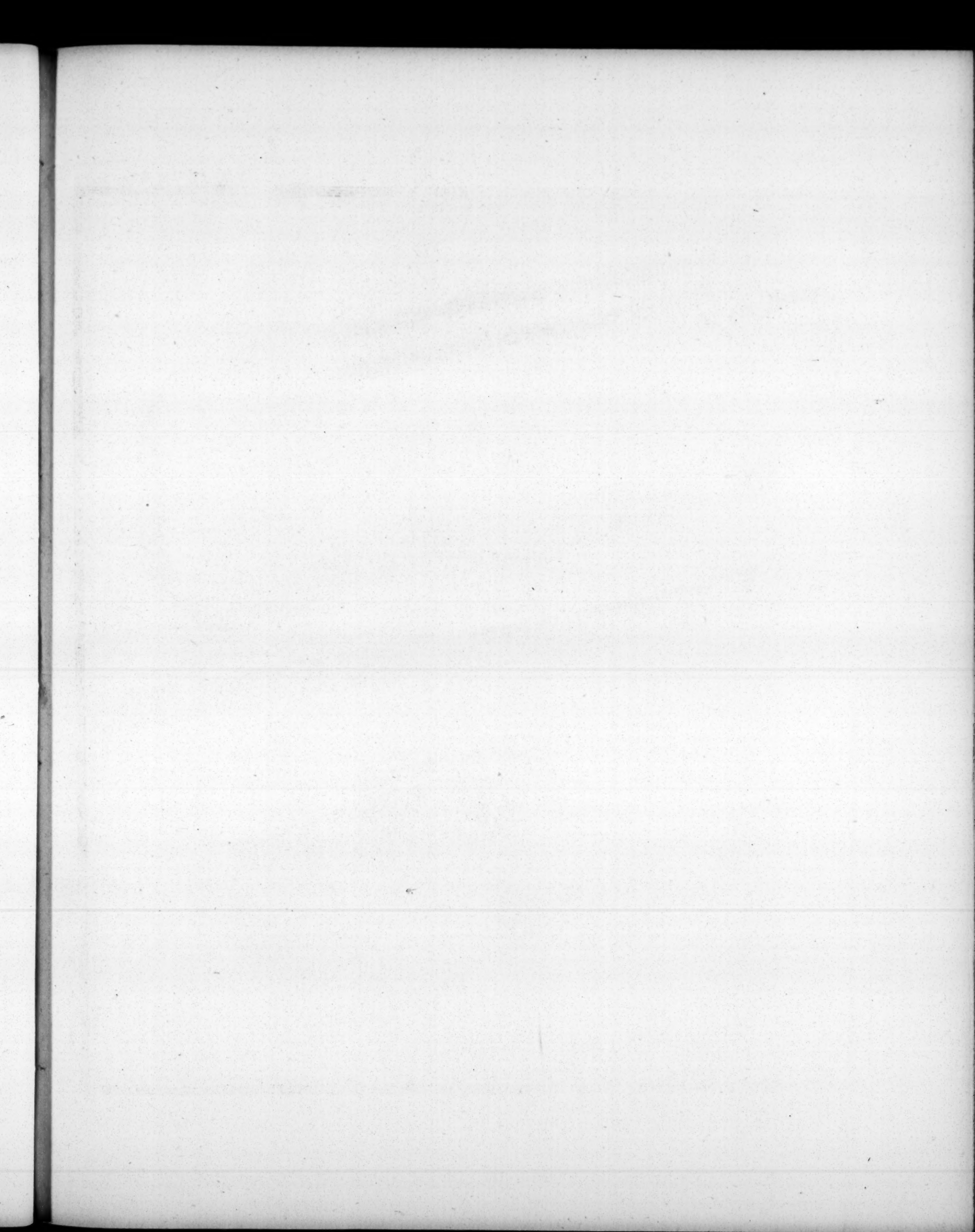
DEAR SIR,

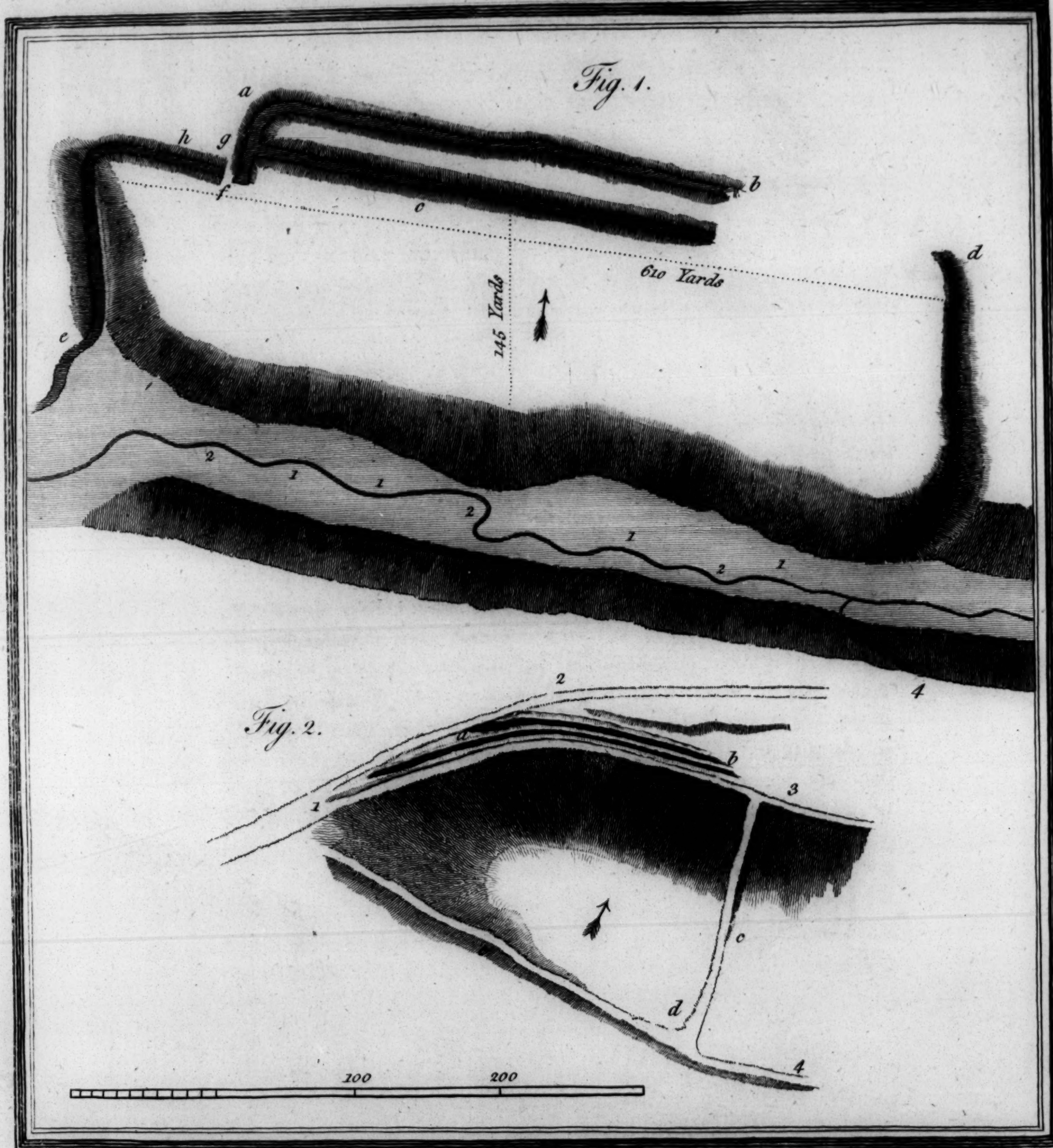
Woodhouse, May 3, 1788.

HAVING been honoured with your judicious observations on Roman camps, stations, and roads, and the great probability there was that they were to be found in this neighbourhood, determined me to explore with more attention the country round Mansfield, and particularly that part of Sherwood Forest between Mansfield and Southwell, the latter being the nearest Roman station we have any knowledge of in this part of the county, and from whence, it is natural to suppose, they took their rout to Pleasley Park, and so to Chesterfield, on which I shall offer a probable conjecture by and by. In this tract I have discovered some Roman camps almost perfect, others with only part of the ditch and vallum to distinguish them, which with their situations, evidently prove them to be Roman.

I should have done myself the honor of communicating to you the discoveries I formerly mentioned long before this, had not bad weather and indisposition greatly retarded my researches. We had so much snow in March that there was no going out; and the beginning of April I had the rheumatism, which obliged me for some days to stay at home. However, I have made the most of my time since, and from the remains of Roman camps I have met with in this neighbourhood, there is

no





H. Rooke del.

Basire. Sc.

no doubt but that the Romans were well acquainted with this part of Nottinghamshire, and this discovery proves your superior judgment in these matters. For further particulars, I must refer you to the description and plans of these camps, to which I have added an account of some antiquities found in the Roman Villa since I communicated that discovery to the Society.

When I had the honor of seeing you here, you was of opinion that the Roman villae near Woodhouse had their *diverticulum*. It undoubtedly appears they had, though I have not yet been able to meet with that distinguishing mark of a Roman road, the elevated ridge. At the bottom of the field where the sepulchres were found, and where an old road formerly went, is a passage cut through a rock, and slopes down a steep bank to Pleasley water, where an old ford is now discernible, though it appears not to have been used for many years. From hence the road went across a little meadow, about fifty or sixty yards to the S. E. end of Pleasley Park. Here a deep ditch or hollow way goes slanting up a bank to the top of the hill, where there are evident marks of a Roman camp. (See plan Pl. X. fig. 1). On the N. side, where the wood is on a level with the adjacent grounds, is a ditch and vallum, the ditch 13 feet wide. They appear perfect 340 yards from (a) to (b). Parallel to these, at the distance of 22 yards, is another ditch (c), about the same width, but rather deeper; from (b) to (d) there are now very little appearances of a ditch or vallum, but from (d) a ditch slopes down to the meadow as already mentioned. The S. side is strongly secured by a steep bank, as is the W. end, where a ditch (now used as a road) slopes down to the end of the wood at (e). The entrance to the camp appears to have been at (f), where it might be easily defended, from the salient angles (g) and (h). The following references will more clearly explain

plain the situation : (N° 1) little meadows in the valley, (N° 2) Pleasley water, (N° 3), the bank at the bottom of the field where the sepulchres were found, (N° 4), the road cut through the rock as above mentioned [*a*].

This camp appears to have been strongly fortified by art and nature, in a well-chosen situation, near a river, and commanding extensive views. As it would contain a considerable number of men, the command would undoubtedly be given to an officer of high rank ; and I think it is not an improbable conjecture, that this general might have built the Roman villae, which evidently appear to have had a communication with the camp [*b*].

About a mile and a half E. of Pleasley Park, and at the end of Mansfield Woodhouse, is a little eminence, called *Winny* hill, where there are the remains of an exploratory camp. (See plan, Pl. X. fig. 2). The double ditch and vallum on the N. W. side are perfect, except where the road has destroyed part of the outward ditch ; the remaining parts from (*a*) to (*b*) are about 160 yards, the base of the vallum 16 feet, bottom of the ditch 6 feet. On the side (*c*) near a road, the vallum seems to have gone up the hill where a hedge has been planted upon it, at (*d*). It appears to have turned down by the side of a hollow way, where there is a steep bank on the opposite side, marked (*e*), which continues to the road. Here it probably joined the other ditch and vallum. N° 1, is where the road branches off ; N° 2, goes to Warsop, Welbeck, and Worksop,

[*a*] The plans of all the camps mentioned in this paper are laid down from the same scale, one hundred yards to an inch.

[*b*] Pleasley Park consists of 183 acres of thick underwood and trees, which made it difficult to trace out the camp.

discovered in the neighbourhood of Mansfield Woodhouse. 7

N^o 3, to Edminstow and Allerton; N^o 4, is a lane that goes about three hundred yards to a brook. From this camp the views are extensive to the N. and W.; that to the latter takes in the whole extent of Pleasley Park. As that camp is not above seven miles from Chesterfield in a straight line, there is great reason to suppose that it was connected with that post by a military road, though it has not yet been discovered.

The Rev. Mr. Pegge has traced a Roman road from Chesterfield, through Sir Henry Hunloke's Park at Wingerworth, to Derbentio or Little Chester near Derby, where it joined the Ikenild-street [c]. Now, Sir, I think it will appear, from the situations of the Roman camps I have lately discovered, that from Southwell the Romans had a chain of posts to Mansfield, (which probably was a station) to the camp in Pleasley Park, and so to Chesterfield, by which judicious disposition they would have a communication between two great Roman roads, the Foss way, which is not far from Southwell, and the Ikenild-street.

Horsley, in his *Britannia Romana* [d], seems to think that Southwell was the *Ad pontem* of Antoninus; and what favours that opinion, are the coins and other antiquities found there. In November last I was present when some stones were discovered which appeared to have been part of a wall; near these were found some bits of painted stucco, two or three tesserae of a pavement, and pieces of Roman tiles, the sides raised exactly resembling those found in the Roman villa near Woodhouse. The Rev. Mr. Bristow, one of the worthy vicars of Southwell, who has a taste for antiquities, first made this discovery in

[c] Roman roads through the country of the Coritani.

[d] P. 439.

digging

digging to make a foundation for a building in his garden. The stones lay five feet below the surface, so that the depth of soil necessary to be removed for a thorough investigation would be attended with a considerable expence.

About three miles from Southwell on the right hand of the road to Mansfield, and near the village of Kirklington, is a hill called *Hexgrave Park* [e], where there are evident marks of an encampment, the ditch and vallum here and there perfect, but the plough has so totally destroyed them in other places, that no precise shape can be made out.

At about three miles and a half S. W. of this camp, and four from Southwell, on the left hand of the road to Mansfield, is a farm on an eminence called the *Combs* [f], where a Roman camp is plainly to be made out. See plan, Pl. xi. fig. 3. The ditch and vallum are perfect at the W. end and on most part of the S. side. At (a) it has been levelled for a garden: the farmhouse stands at the E. end at (b) here I found several fragments of Roman bricks and tiles, which the farmer told me they frequently turned up in ploughing. About 50 yards to the N. is a circular vallum of earth (c) near 40 yards diameter; part of it has been very lately destroyed by the plough.

This camp commands a very extensive view over Sherwood Forest, to the N. W. towards Mansfield, as that at Hexgrave does to the S. W. The ground about the Combs, which was part of the forest, has been inclosed to the extent of near two miles, of course many roads must have been destroyed. The great road from Southwell to Mansfield (eleven miles) goes through Farnsfield between the two camps, leaving that at Hexgrave three miles to the right, that on the Combs one mile

[e] An estate belonging to the archiepiscopal see of York. See Mr. Raftall's History of Southwell, p. 374.

[f] See History of Southwell, p. 366—372.



Fig. 3.

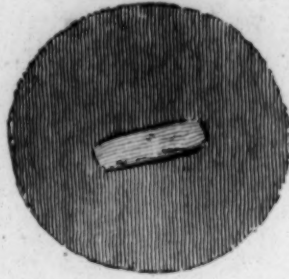
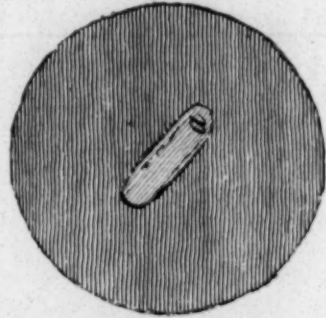
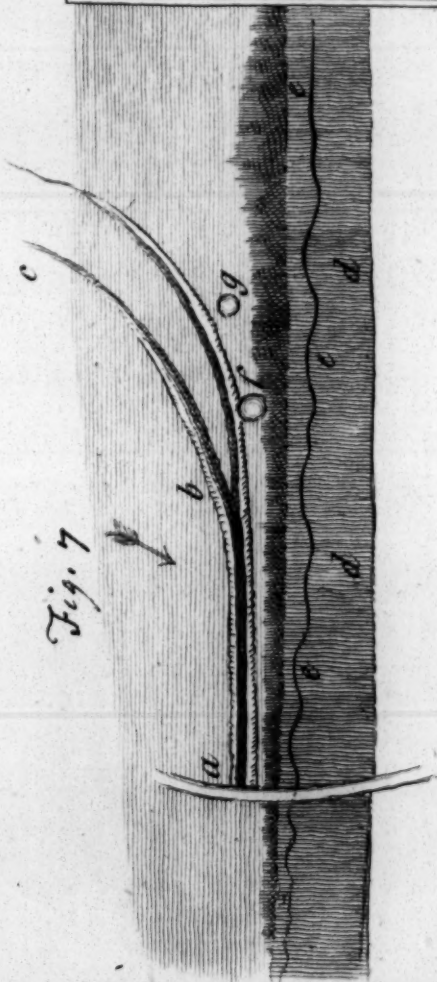
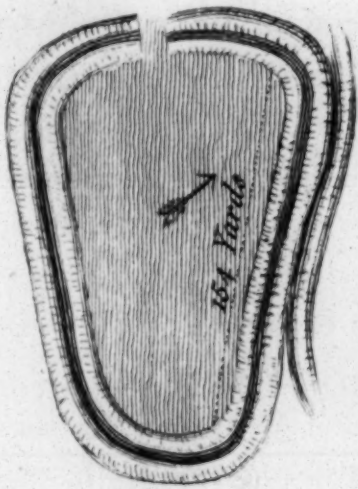
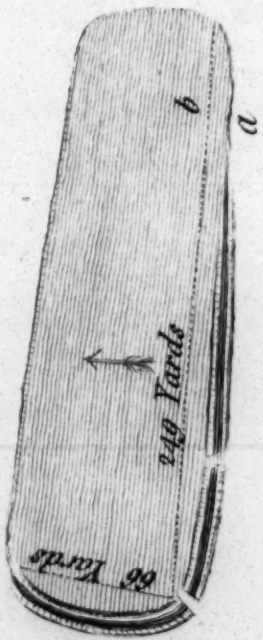


Fig. 4.

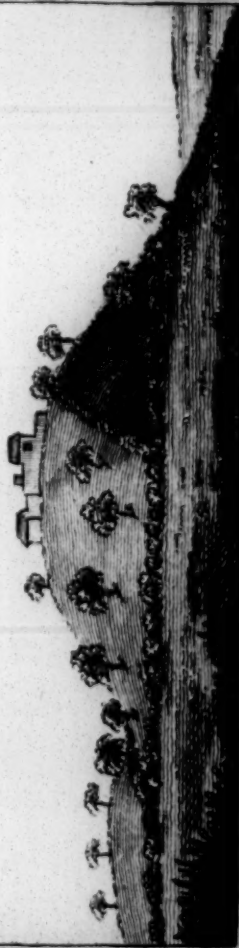


Fig. 9.

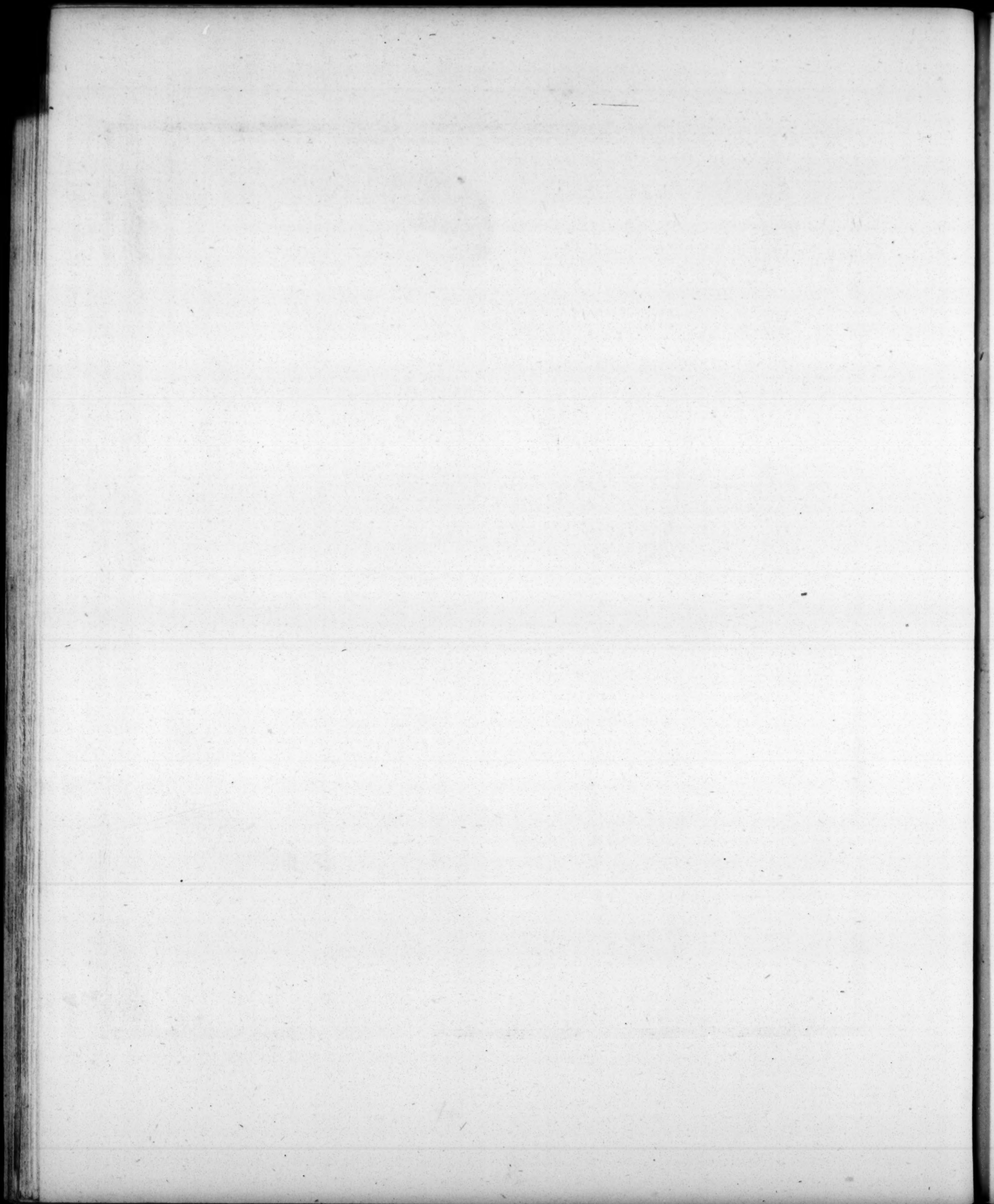


N. E. view of the Combs.

N. W. view of a hill in Sherwood Forest in the parish of Blidworth on which has been a Roman Camp.

H. Rooke, del.

Basire, sc.



to the left [g]. We have reason to admire the judgment of the Romans in their choice of these camps: they not only command extensive views over the country through which they were to proceed, but are so situated that intelligence might be conveyed by signals, as they are not only within sight of each other, but are seen from the station at Southwell. The perspective view of the Combs, Pl. XI. fig. 4, will give an idea of the situation. About one mile S. W. of the Combs, and little more than a mile from the village of Oxon, is another small exploratory camp very perfect. See the plan Pl. XI. fig. 5. It goes by the name of *Oldox*, which probably means *old works*; the N. E. side, where there is a double ditch, is 154 yards; the outward vallum slopes down a bank of underwood, where part of it has been destroyed. Fig. 6, is a section of the double ditch and vallum. About 100 yards W. of this camp a hill rises in a conical shape; the top appears to be a large tumulus, from whence there is a very extensive view over the forest towards Mansfield: in a direct line W. of this tumulus are two more about half a mile asunder; that in the centre is 728 feet in circumference, the other 159 feet.

The next post the Romans seem to have taken possession of in their route to Mansfield, is on a hill within three miles of it. See the plan, Pl. XI. fig. 7. On part of the N. and N. W. sides of this camp, the ditch and vallum appear perfect. From (a) to (b), where the double ditch begins, is 127 yards; from (b) to

[g] The ingenious Mr. Raftall, in his *Antiquities of Southwell*, mentions these camps, but does not allow them to be of a Roman origin. He gives very plausible reasons for his opinion. But had this gentleman carefully examined the camp on the Combs, and discovered Roman bricks and tiles, I am satisfied he would agree with me in thinking that these camps were originally of Roman construction, whatever people might afterwards take possession of them.

(c) 140 yards: here the ditch is almost destroyed, but the vallum appears to have gone up the hill on the W. side. There are now little or no appearances of a ditch or vallum on the S. E. sides, owing to the hill having been enclosed and cultivated. On the N. side the ground slopes down to a morass marked (d) 30 yards wide, through which runs a little brook called Rainworth water (e), which divides Mansfield and Blidworth parishes. Close to the vallum are two tumuli (f) and (g) 35 yards asunder; the diameter of (f) was near 8 yards, that of (g) near 7: these I opened to the depth of near 6 feet from the top, and about 1 foot and half from the level of the natural soil. Here I perceived a thin body of smooth clay near 9 feet in length, and 2 feet 4 inches in width. See plan, Pl. XI. fig. 8. On this lay ashes and burnt bones. On the sides (as marked in the plan) the ashes were very black, owing I imagine to their not having been mixed with the burnt bones: at the end marked (a), I found three teeth. As there were no urns in these tumuli, I should suppose they were the sepulchres of private soldiers. Fig. 9, is a perspective view of this hill and the two tumuli. About two miles N. W. of this camp, and in a line with Mansfield, is *Bury hill*. I must here observe that there are two Roman camps (probably more) that are called *Bury hill*, one near Bicester in Oxfordshire, the other near Andover. There could not be a better situation for an exploratory camp than this Bury hill; it takes in a great extent of prospect; the W. view towards Derbyshire is bounded by the Peak hills to the S. and S. E. the camps at Hexgrave and Combs, and the tumulus joining to the little camp near Oxon, are plainly to be seen, but as the grounds have been layed out in the modern taste, and a good house built on the hill, many old roads have been turned, and banks and
ditches

discovered in the Neighbourhood of Mansfield Woodhouse. 111

ditches levelled. There are now the remains of several hollow ways and old roads on this part of the forest, which have escaped the ravages of time. Mr. Horsley supposes that these cross roads of the Romans and the vicinal branches were not made so strong and durable, or so grand and magnificent, as the principal ways, and for this reason have been sooner and more generally ruined and lost [b]. Though we have not this guide to follow, yet it is sufficiently obvious that the above mentioned camps point out the route of the Romans towards Mansfield, where several Roman coins have been found. I have four now in my possession, one of Vespasian, and one of Constantinus very perfect; the other two appear to be Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.

I think, Sir, it plainly appears from what has already been discovered, that the Romans had camps, and I may venture to say stations, in this part of Nottinghamshire, hitherto unnoticed. Roman roads are difficult to find in a country that has been often planted with wood, and at various times inclosed and cultivated: however, roads there must have been, and I think the forest between Mansfield and Southwell the most likely part to find one in.

I shall take this opportunity of mentioning a few antiquities I found in clearing out some of the rooms in the Roman villa, since I had the honor of communicating that discovery to the Society. In digging to the floor of a room, which from its situation I take to be the *Apodyterium* or stripping room, being joined to the hypocaust and cold bath, I found an instrument, which, from its construction and lightness, I should suppose to be the rubber which the Romans used to rub their skins with;

[b] Brit. Rom. Book iii. chap. 2, p. 390

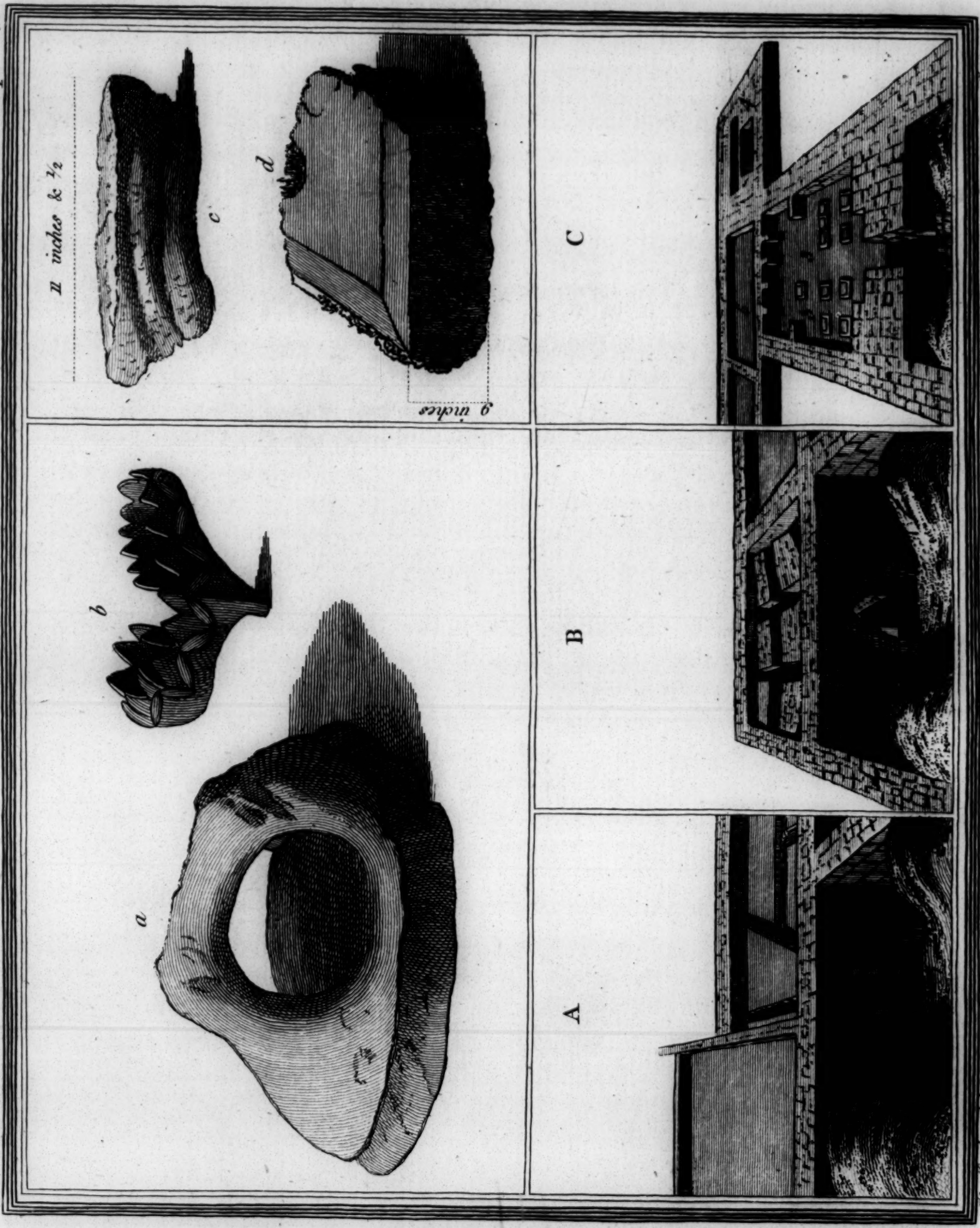
see Pl. XII. fig. *e.* (*a*). It is of a pale grey colour, the bottom smooth; the indented rim towards the lower part seems as if it was intended for fixing a cloth round it, when a more gentle friction was required than that of the Strigil or Pumex.

Governor Pownall, in his curious and learned account of the baths discovered at Badenweiler, gives a particular account of the use of this instrument. He says "the Pumex acted as a kind of flesh brush or rasp; but the use of the Pumex stopped not here; it was prepared so as to polish the skin [*i*]. From this account, there is reason to suppose that this instrument of mine was intended for both purposes. Fig. (*b*) was found sticking to the coulter of a plough in a field near the villa: it is made of brass, and was probably used as a fibula, or some kind of ornament, it appears to have been bent. Both *a* and *b* are engraved of the original size. Fig. (*c*) seems to be part of the capital of an altar: it was found in clearing out the *sphæristerium*, or inner court of the *villa rustica*, near the two bases of altars mentioned in my account of that villa. I must here beg leave to observe, that there is a similar situation of a pedestal in the *sphæristerium* of the baths of Badenweiler, where Governor Pownall says, "is the pedestal on which, some suppose, a statue once stood: I am rather disposed to think it an altar [*k*]." He likewise takes notice of the place of another in the *sphæristerium* on the E. side of the baths. The opinion of so learned an antiquary on these pedestals favours my conjecture, that the bases in the inner court of the *villa rustica* are bases of altars.

Fig. (*d*), is a fragment of stucco floor, several pieces of which were found in clearing out the hypocaust at the S. E. end of the

[*i*] Pownall's *Provincia Romana*, Appendix, p. 192.

[*k*] Ibid. p. 190.



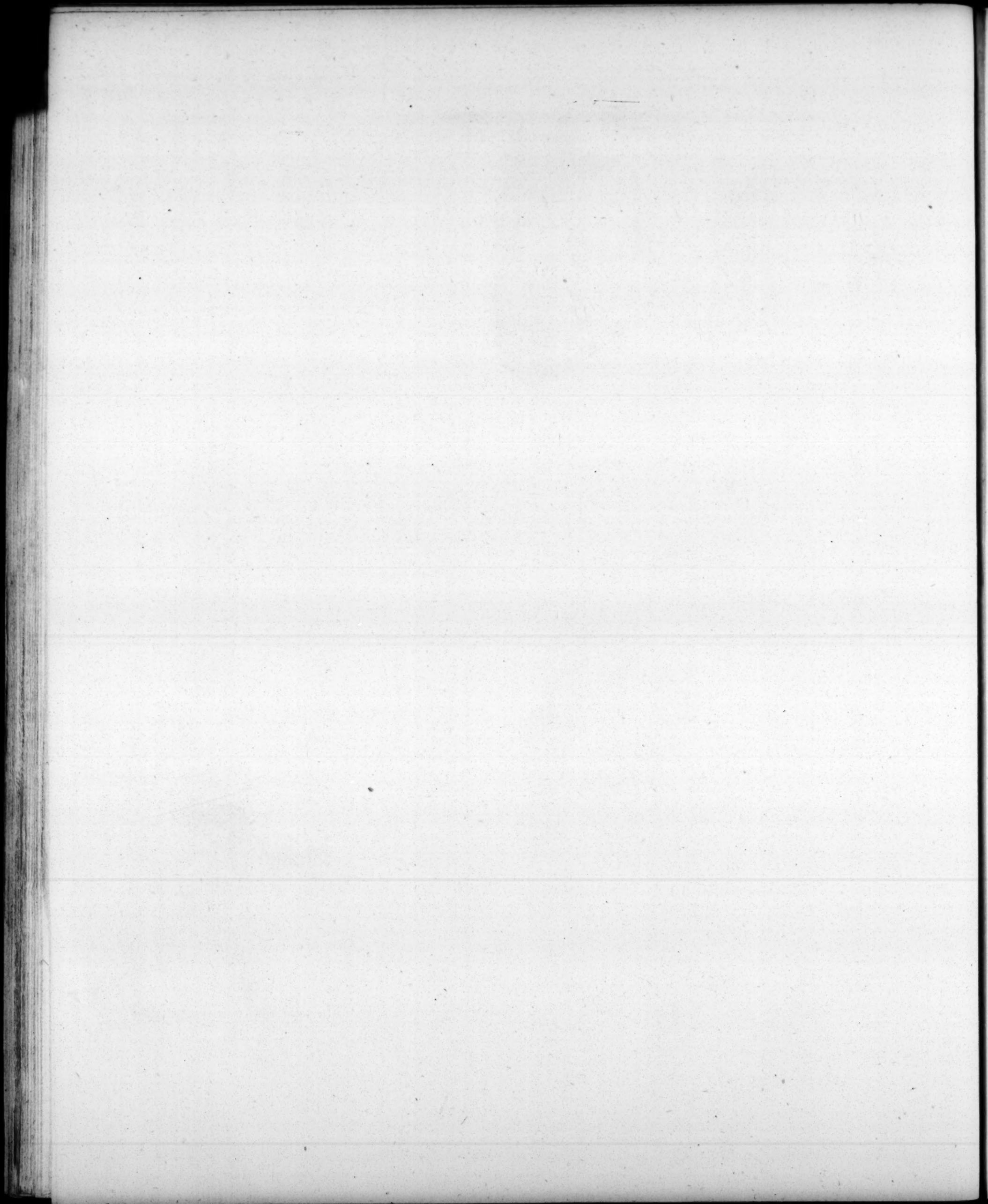
2 inches & 1/2

9 inches

H. Brooke, del.

Fig. 12.

Antiquities at Mansfield Woodhouse.



villa rustica. It appears to be a composition of pounded brick and lime : on the top is a thin coat of polished stucco, about a quarter of an inch thick. Cameron, in his account of the Roman baths [1], mentions a piece of stucco floor found placed upon tiles over the hypocaust in Caracalla's baths, three palms or nine inches thick, made of pounded brick and lime, and which had a smooth surface. From the description and print he gives of it, it exactly resembles both in thickness and compositions the fragments found here.

As the construction of these hypocausts in the Roman villa will be best explained by perspective views, I have ventured to give drawings of them in Pl. XII.

(A) represents that at the S. end of the *villa urbana*, (B) that at the N. E. end of the *villa rustica*. These were evidently intended for heating the rooms. (C) is at the S. E. end of this villa, and appears to have been constructed for heating the *sudatorium* and *callida lavatio*.

N^o 1, is where the fire was made, and where ashes were found ; N^o 2, the arch through which the heat was conveyed to the flues ; N^o 3, tiles upon which there appeared to have been pillars of stucco that had supported the floor ; N^o 4, the little cold bath. N^o 5, the *apodyterium* or stripping room.

Should you think these cursory remarks worthy of being communicated to the Society, I must beg you will do me the honour to lay them before that learned body in whatever shape you think proper.

I am, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

your most obedient, and

most obliged, humble servant,

H. R O O K E.

[1] P. 157.

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